

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 01204 110717Z
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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2629
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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN, GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 1204

USIA FOR IEU

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CZ
SUBJECT: LIBERATION '45 COMMEMORATED BY EMBASSY

REF: PRAGUE 1190 SENT USINFO MAY 20, 1977

1. AMBASSADOR BYRNE AND EMBASSY PARTY LAID COMMEMORATIVE
WREATHS AND VISITED SITES IMPORTANT TO AMERICAN ROLE IN THE
LIBERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA ON MAY 7 AND 8. MFA HAD BEEN INFORMED
IN ADVANCE OF EMBASSY PLANS.

2. FIRST STOP WAS VITEJOVICE MONUMENT NEAR CESKE BUDEJOVICE,
RECENTLY DISCOVERED BY DEFENSE ATTACHE. PLAQUE NOTED, "MAY
THIS MEMORIAL COMMEMORATE FOR ALL TIME THE MEETING AT THE
CROSSROADS OF THE TROOPS OF FIVE ARMIES. HERE THE RUSSIAN AND
AMERICAN HEROES SHOOK HANDS. THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE
WILL NOT FORGET ITS LIBERATORS."

3. NEARBY, AMBASSADOR BYRNE VISITED A COLLECTION OF AMERICAN
MILITARY VEHICLES OF WORLD WAR II VINTAGE CAREFULLY STORED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PRAGUE 01204 110717Z

AND MAINTAINED BY A PRIVATE COLLECTOR.

4. WREATHS WERE LATER LAID AT POLE, LNARE, PILSEN/LITICE AND
CHEB. EMBASSY PARTY VISITED THE TOWN SQUARE IN ROKYCANY, WHERE
GEN. PATTON ADDRESSED AMERICAN TROOPS IN SEPTEMBER 1945,
AND THE CHURCH IN PILSEN WHERE SERVICE MARKING WAR'S END WAS
HELD ON MAY 10, 1945.

5. AT EACH SITE, SPRING FLOWERS HAD ALREADY BEEN PLACED BY VILLAGERS, SOME OF WHOM ALSO RECALLED FOR THE EMBASSY PARTY VIVID MEMORIES OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II AND THE AMERICAN ROLE IN IT. A BUSLOAD OF CZECH TOURISTS FROM BRNO JOINED AMBASSADOR AND MRS. BYRNE, DEFENSE AND ARMY ATTACHES, AND PAO AT CHEB CEREMONY. THREE MEN SHOWED UP AT PILSEN CHURCH SAYING THEY HAD HEARD FROM VOA THAT AMBASSADOR WOULD BE VISITING SOUTHERN AND WESTERN BOHEMIA. ONE SAID POLICE HAD ALREADY BEEN TO ONE MONUMENT SITE INQUIRING ABOUT EMBASSY VISIT. AT LEAST FOUR CARS STAKED OUT THE CHEB SITE, AND THERE WERE PLAN-CLOTHED PHOTOGRAPHERS AS WELL. SURVEILLANCE WAS INDICATED AT OTHER SITES. EVIDENT CANCELLATION OF MASS IN PILSEN SUGGESTS GOC REACTION TO THE ANNOUNCED PRESENCE OF U.S. AMBASSADOR AND PARTY THERE.

6. COMMENT: BASED ON AVAILABLE RECORDS, THIS IS, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, FIRST TIME SUCH EXTENSIVE COMMEMORATIVE ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN TO AREAS LIBERATED BY AMERICAN FORCES. WE BELIEVED THIS WAS A HIGHLY WORTHWHILE EXERCISE. ONE OF THE STAPLES OF GOC PROPAGANDA IS THE LIBERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA BY THE RED ARMY. RARELY IS THE AMERICAN ROLE MENTIONED, ALTHOUGH AMERICAN TROOPS LIBERATED WESTERN AND SOUTHWESTERN BOHEMIA WEST OF THE ESTABLISHED LINE OF DEMARCATION EXTENDING FROM KARLOVY VARY THROUGH PILSEN-ROKCAN AREA DOWN TO CESKE BUDEJOVICE. BY SHOWING THE FLAG IN THREE MAJOR PROVINCIAL CITIES, BY VISITING AMERICAN MONUMENTS AT A TIME WHEN THEY ARE LARGELY NEGLECTED AND SOME HAVE DISAPPEARED AND BY VOA COVERAGE OF THE HISTORY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S LIBERATION, WE ARE HELPING TO CLARIFY AND PUBLICIZE THE AMERICAN ROLE IN ONE OF THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PRAGUE 01204 110717Z

MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN MODERN CZECHOSLOVAK HISTORY. THERE WERE SEVERAL VISITORS AT EACH OF THE MONUMENT SITES, AND MANY QUICKLY VOLUNTEERED THEIR OWN COMMENTS ON THE WAR, WHICH WERE HIGHLY POSITIVE AS TO THE AMERICAN ROLE. NO DOUBT THEY WILL SPREAD NEWS OF THE WREATH LAYING AND SUCH WORD OF MOUTH COMMUNICATION, COUPLED WITH VOA REPORT, WILL SERVE TO HELP SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON THIS IMPORTANT EVENT.
BYRNE

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